

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for effecting payment for a purchaser of at least one item offered for an electronic auction sale by a seller via an electronic auction web site maintained by at least one computing device of an electronic auction system, said method comprising the steps of:

maintaining an electronic database of a plurality of electronic auction payment accounts corresponding to a plurality of users, including the purchaser, of said electronic auction web site and a payment segment of said electronic auction web site by an electronic auction payment system integrated with said electronic auction system, each of said plurality of electronic auction payment accounts storing funds therein and each capable of being used for user transactions in the electronic auction system;

performing at least one payment-related activity by at least one processor of said electronic auction payment system for effecting payment for said purchaser, said at least one payment-related activity selected from the group consisting of debiting an electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item and maintained by said electronic auction payment system, and withdrawing funds from at least one account storing funds therein and not corresponding to at least one of the plurality of users, wherein at least one payment source corresponding to the purchaser is used to obtain funds for storing within the electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser prior to debiting the electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser; and

crediting by said at least one processor at least one account corresponding to the seller to effect payment for the at least one item offered for the electronic auction

sale via the electronic auction web site.

2. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts includes an electronic auction payment account corresponding to the seller.

3. (Original) The method according to Claim 2, wherein the at least one credited account corresponding to the seller includes at least the electronic auction payment account corresponding to the seller.

4. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of receiving authorization from the purchaser of the at least one item to perform the at least one payment-related activity and to credit the at least one account corresponding to the seller prior to the steps of debiting the purchaser's electronic auction payment account and crediting the at least one account corresponding to the seller.

5. (Original) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the steps of debiting and crediting are performed in real-time.

6. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

determining if there are sufficient funds in the electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item to effect payment; and

performing the step of withdrawing funds from the at least one account storing funds therein and not corresponding to at least one of the plurality of users, if there are not sufficient funds in the electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item.

7. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 6, further comprising the step of charging interest for funds withdrawn from the at least one account storing funds therein to effect payment.

8. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

determining if the purchaser of the at least one item has indicated a purchase of insurance and/or for a personal guarantee for the at least one item; and

debiting the electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item for an amount of funds to cover the purchase of insurance and/or for the personal guarantee for the at least one item purchased, if the purchaser of the at least one item has indicated the purchase of insurance and/or for the personal guarantee for the at least one item.

9. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 8, further comprising the step of retaining, by an operator of the at least one computing device, a portion of the amount of funds debited as a service fee for the purchase of insurance and/or for the personal guarantee for the at least one item.

10. (Original) The method according to Claim 2, further comprising the step of initiating the investment of funds corresponding to at least one of the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts.

11. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 10, further comprising the steps of:

allocating a percentage of funds gained by investing the funds to the at least one of the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts; and

retaining, by an operator of the at least one computing device, a percentage of funds gained by investing the funds.

12. (Original) The method according to Claim 2, further comprising the step of issuing checks to at least one potential user having a corresponding electronic auction payment account.

13. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of retaining, by an operator of the at least one computing device, a percentage of funds debited from the electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item prior to crediting the at least one account corresponding to the seller.

14. (Previously Presented) A system for effecting payment for a purchaser of at least one item offered for an electronic auction sale by a seller via an electronic auction web site maintained by at least one computing device of an electronic auction system, said system comprising:

an electronic auction payment system integrated with said electronic auction system, said electronic auction payment system comprising a plurality of electronic auction payment accounts and means for maintaining a payment segment of said electronic auction web site and said plurality of electronic auction payment accounts corresponding to a plurality of users, including the purchaser, of the electronic auction web site, where the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts store funds therein, and the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts include an electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item offered for the electronic auction sale and an electronic auction payment account corresponding to the

seller;

means for performing at least one payment-related activity by said electronic auction payment system for effecting payment for said purchaser, said at least one payment-related activity selected from the group consisting of debiting an electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item and maintained by said electronic auction payment system, and withdrawing funds from at least one account storing funds therein and not corresponding to at least one of the plurality of users, wherein at least a portion of any debited funds correspond to funds transferred to the electronic auction payment account and stored therein prior to debiting the electronic auction payment account; and

means for crediting at least one account corresponding to the seller to effect payment for the at least one item.

15. (Previously Presented) The system according to Claim 14, further comprising:

means for determining if there are sufficient funds in the electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item to effect payment; and

means for performing the step of withdrawing funds from the at least one account storing funds therein and not corresponding to at least one of the plurality of users, if there are not sufficient funds in the electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item.

16. (Previously Presented) The system according to Claim 15, further comprising means for charging interest for funds withdrawn from the at least one account

storing funds therein to effect payment.

17. (Original) The system according to Claim 14, further comprising means for initiating the investment of funds corresponding to at least one of the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts.

18. (Original) The system according to Claim 17, further comprising:
means for allocating a percentage of funds gained by investing the funds to the at least one of the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts; and
means for retaining a percentage of funds gained by investing the funds.

19. (Previously Presented) The system according to Claim 14, further comprising means for retaining a percentage of funds debited from the electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item prior to crediting the at least one account corresponding to the seller.

20. (Previously Presented) The system according to Claim 14, wherein the means for debiting and the means for crediting debit the electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item and credit the at least one account corresponding to the seller, respectively, in real-time.

21. (Previously Presented) A payment system for effecting payment to a seller of at least one item offered for an electronic auction sale via an electronic auction web site and won by a winning bidder at the conclusion of the electronic auction sale, said electronic auction web site being maintained by an electronic auction system, said payment system comprising:

a database containing a plurality of electronic auction payment accounts,
where the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts store actual funds therein, and

where one of the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts corresponds to the winning bidder of the at least one item and one of the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts corresponds to the seller; and

a computing device including application software for maintaining the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts and for automatically effecting payment to the seller by accessing the database and debiting actual funds stored within the electronic auction payment account corresponding to the winning bidder of the at least one item and crediting at least one account corresponding to the seller without any intervention by the winning bidder following the conclusion of the electronic auction, wherein said payment system maintains the database containing the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts and a payment segment of the electronic auction web site, and wherein at least a portion of funds debited correspond to funds transferred to the electronic auction payment account and stored therein prior to debiting the electronic auction payment account.

22. (Original) The payment system according to Claim 21, wherein the computing device debits the electronic auction payment account corresponding to the winning bidder of the at least one item and credits the at least one account corresponding to the seller in real-time.

23. (Original) The payment system according to Claim 21, wherein the computing device further includes application software for automatically effecting payment to an operator of the electronic auction web site using at least funds debited from the electronic auction payment account corresponding to the winning bidder of the at least one item.

24. (Currently Amended) A method for automatically effecting payment for a user of an electronic auction web site maintained by an electronic auction system, said method comprising the steps of:

determining by at least one processor if there are sufficient funds in an electronic payment account to effect payment, said electronic payment account being maintained by an electronic auction payment system integrated with said electronic auction system, said electronic payment account corresponding to the user of the electronic auction web site and storing funds therein;

debiting the electronic payment account corresponding to the user of the electronic auction web site and crediting at least one account to effect payment for the user of the electronic auction web site, if there are sufficient funds in the electronic payment account corresponding to the user to effect payment, wherein at least a portion of any debited funds correspond to funds transferred to the electronic payment account and stored therein prior to debiting the electronic payment account; and

loaning funds to effect payment, if there are not sufficient funds in the electronic payment account corresponding to the user of the electronic auction web site.

25. (Original) The method according to Claim 24, wherein the step of debiting the payment account corresponding to the user of the electronic auction web site and crediting the at least one account to effect payment for the user of the electronic auction web site, if there are sufficient funds in the payment account corresponding to the user to effect payment, occurs in real-time.

26. (Original) The method according to Claim 24, further comprising the step of charging interest for loaning funds to effect payment.

27. (Original) The method according to Claim 24, wherein the step of debiting comprises the step of retaining, by an operator associated with the electronic auction web site, a percentage of funds debited from the payment account corresponding to the user of the electronic auction web site prior to crediting the at least one account.

28. (Previously Presented) A payment system for effecting payment for at least one of a plurality of online auction registered users of an online auction web site maintained by an online auction system, said payment system comprising:

a database containing information corresponding to a plurality of accounts of the plurality of online auction registered users, said plurality of accounts storing funds therein; and

a computing device including application software for maintaining the plurality of accounts and for periodically effecting payment for the at least one of the plurality of online auction registered users by debiting an account of the plurality of accounts and crediting at least one account, wherein the debited account corresponds to the at least one online auction registered user, wherein said payment system is integrated with said online auction system and maintains a payment segment of said online auction web site, wherein at least a portion of funds debited correspond to funds transferred to the debited account and stored therein prior to debiting the account.

29. (Previously Presented) The payment system according to Claim 28, wherein application software periodically effects payment for the at least one of the plurality of online auction registered users without any intervention by the at least one online auction registered user.

30. (Previously Presented) A payment system for effecting payment to an operator of an online auction web site maintained by an online auction system, said payment system comprising:

a database containing information corresponding to a plurality of accounts of a plurality of online auction registered users, said plurality of accounts storing funds therein; and

a computing device including application software for maintaining said plurality of accounts and for automatically effecting payment for at least one of the plurality of online auction registered users by debiting an account of the plurality of accounts and crediting at least one account corresponding to the operator, wherein the debited account corresponds to the at least one online auction registered user, wherein said payment system is integrated with said online auction system and maintains a payment segment of said online auction web site, wherein at least a portion of funds debited correspond to funds transferred to the debited account and stored therein prior to debiting the account.

31. (Previously Presented) The payment system according to Claim 30, wherein application software automatically effects payment for the at least one of the plurality of online auction registered users without any intervention by the at least one online auction registered user.

32. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the at least one payment source is a bank account.

33. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the at least one payment source is a credit card.

34. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein said at least one payment source is used to automatically replenish at least a portion of the funds debited from the electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser.

35. (Currently Amended) A method for effecting payment for a purchaser of at least one item offered for an electronic auction sale by a seller via an electronic auction web site maintained by at least one computing device of an electronic auction system, said method comprising the steps of:

maintaining an electronic database of a plurality of electronic auction payment accounts corresponding to a plurality of users, including the purchaser, of said electronic auction web site and a payment segment of said electronic auction web site by an electronic auction payment system integrated with said electronic auction system, each of said plurality of electronic auction payment accounts storing funds therein and each capable of being used for user transactions in the electronic auction system;

performing at least one payment-related activity by at least one processor of said electronic auction payment system for effecting payment for said purchaser, said at least one payment-related activity selected from the group consisting of debiting an electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item and maintained by said electronic auction payment system, and withdrawing funds from at least one account storing funds therein and not corresponding to at least one of the plurality of users, wherein at least a portion of any debited funds correspond to funds transferred to the electronic auction payment account and stored therein prior to debiting the electronic auction payment account; and

crediting by said at least one processor at least one account corresponding to the seller to effect payment for the at least one item offered for the electronic auction sale via the electronic auction web site.

36. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 35, wherein at least a portion of the debited funds are transferred to the electronic auction payment account prior to debiting the electronic auction payment account from at least one of the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts.

37. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 35, wherein at least a portion of the debited funds are transferred to the electronic auction payment account prior to debiting the electronic auction payment account from at least one payment source corresponding to the purchaser.

38. (Currently Amended) A method for effecting payment for a purchaser of at least one item offered for an electronic auction sale by a seller via an electronic auction web site maintained by at least one computing device of an electronic auction system, said method comprising the steps of:

maintaining an electronic database of a plurality of electronic auction payment accounts corresponding to a plurality of users, including the purchaser, of said electronic auction web site and a payment segment of said electronic auction web site by an electronic auction payment system integrated with said electronic auction system, each of said plurality of electronic auction payment accounts storing actual funds therein and said actual funds capable of being used for user transactions in the electronic auction system;

performing by at least one processor at least one payment-related activity by said electronic auction payment system for effecting payment for said purchaser, said at least one payment-related activity selected from the group consisting of debiting an electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item and maintained by said electronic auction payment system, and withdrawing funds from at least one account storing funds therein and not corresponding to at least one of the plurality of users; and

crediting by said at least one processor at least one account corresponding to the seller to effect payment for the at least one item offered for the electronic auction sale via the electronic auction web site.

39. (Previously Presented) A system for effecting payment for a purchaser of at least one item offered for an electronic auction sale by a seller via an electronic auction web site maintained by at least one computing device of an electronic auction system, said system comprising:

an electronic auction payment system integrated with said electronic auction system, said electronic auction payment system comprising a plurality of electronic auction payment accounts and means for maintaining a payment segment of said electronic auction web site and said plurality of electronic auction payment accounts corresponding to a plurality of users, including the purchaser, of the electronic auction web site, where each of the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts store actual funds therein, and the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts include an electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item offered for the electronic auction sale and an electronic auction payment account

corresponding to the seller;

means for performing at least one payment-related activity by said electronic auction payment system for effecting payment for said purchaser, said at least one payment-related activity selected from the group consisting of debiting an electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item and maintained by said electronic auction payment system, and withdrawing funds from at least one account storing actual funds therein and not corresponding to at least one of the plurality of users; and

means for crediting at least one account corresponding to the seller to effect payment for the at least one item.

40. (Previously Presented) A payment system for effecting payment to a seller of at least one item offered for an electronic auction sale via an electronic auction web site and won by a winning bidder at the conclusion of the electronic auction sale, said electronic auction web site being maintained by an electronic auction system, said payment system comprising:

a database containing a plurality of electronic auction payment accounts, where each of the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts store actual funds therein, and where one of the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts corresponds to the winning bidder of the at least one item and one of the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts corresponds to the seller; and

a computing device including application software for maintaining the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts and for automatically effecting payment to the seller by accessing the database and debiting actual funds stored within the

electronic auction payment account corresponding to the winning bidder of the at least one item and crediting at least one account corresponding to the seller without any intervention by the winning bidder following the conclusion of the electronic auction, wherein said payment system maintains the database containing the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts and a payment segment of the electronic auction web site.

41. (Previously Presented) A payment system for effecting payment for at least one of a plurality of online auction registered users of an online auction web site maintained by an online auction system, said payment system comprising:

a database containing information corresponding to a plurality of accounts of the plurality of online auction registered users, each of said plurality of accounts storing actual funds therein; and

a computing device including application software for maintaining the plurality of accounts and for periodically effecting payment for the at least one of the plurality of online auction registered users by debiting actual funds stored within an account of the plurality of accounts and crediting at least one account, wherein the debited account corresponds to the at least one online auction registered user, wherein said payment system is integrated with said online auction system and maintains a payment segment of said online auction web site.

42. (Previously Presented) The payment system according to Claim 41, wherein application software periodically effects payment for the at least one of the plurality of online auction registered users without any intervention by the at least one online auction registered user.

43. (Previously Presented) A payment system for effecting payment to an operator of an online auction web site maintained by an online auction system, said payment system comprising:

a database containing information corresponding to a plurality of accounts of a plurality of online auction registered users, each of said plurality of accounts storing actual funds therein; and

a computing device including application software for maintaining said plurality of accounts and for automatically effecting payment for at least one of the plurality of online auction registered users by debiting actual funds stored within an account of the plurality of accounts and crediting at least one account corresponding to the operator, wherein the debited account corresponds to the at least one online auction registered user, wherein said payment system is integrated with said online auction system and maintains a payment segment of said online auction web site.

44. (Previously Presented) The payment system according to Claim 43, wherein application software automatically effects payment for the at least one of the plurality of online auction registered users without any intervention by the at least one online auction registered user.

45. (Previously Presented) A method for effecting payment for a purchaser of at least one item offered for an electronic auction sale by a seller via an electronic auction web site maintained by at least one computing device of an electronic auction system, said method comprising the steps of:

maintaining an electronic database of a plurality of electronic auction payment accounts corresponding to a plurality of users, including the purchaser, of said

electronic auction web site and a payment segment of said electronic auction web site by an electronic auction payment system integrated with said electronic auction system, each of said plurality of electronic auction payment accounts storing funds therein and not information relating to sources which can be used to initiate payment, such as credit card information, and each of said plurality of electronic auction payment accounts capable of being used for user transactions in the electronic auction system;

performing by at least one processor at least one payment-related activity by said electronic auction payment system for effecting payment for said purchaser, said at least one payment-related activity selected from the group consisting of debiting an electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item and maintained by said electronic auction payment system, and withdrawing funds from at least one account storing funds therein and not corresponding to at least one of the plurality of users; and

crediting by said at least one processor at least one account corresponding to the seller to effect payment for the at least one item offered for the electronic auction sale via the electronic auction web site.

46. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 45, wherein the at least one payment source is a bank account.

47. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 45, wherein the at least one payment source is a credit card.

48. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 45, wherein said at least one payment source is used to automatically replenish at least a portion of the funds debited from the electronic auction payment account corresponding

to the purchaser.

49. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 45, wherein at least a portion of the debited funds are transferred to the electronic auction payment account prior to debiting the electronic auction payment account from at least one of the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts.

50. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 45, wherein at least a portion of the debited funds are transferred to the electronic auction payment account prior to debiting the electronic auction payment account from at least one payment source corresponding to the purchaser.

51. (Currently Amended) A method for effecting payment for a purchaser of at least one item offered for an electronic auction sale by a seller via an electronic auction web site maintained by at least one computing device of an electronic auction system, said method comprising the steps of:

maintaining an electronic database of a plurality of electronic auction payment accounts corresponding to a plurality of users, including the purchaser, of said electronic auction web site and a payment segment of said electronic auction web site by an electronic auction payment system integrated with said electronic auction system, each of said plurality of electronic auction payment accounts storing funds therein and not information relating to sources which can be used to initiate payment, such as credit card information, and each of said plurality of electronic auction payment accounts capable of being used for user transactions in the electronic auction system;

performing by at least one processor at least one payment-related activity by said electronic auction payment system for effecting payment for said purchaser, said

at least one payment-related activity selected from the group consisting of debiting an electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item and maintained by said electronic auction payment system, and withdrawing funds from at least one account storing funds therein and not corresponding to at least one of the plurality of users; and

crediting by said at least one processor at least one account corresponding to the seller to effect payment for the at least one item offered for the electronic auction sale via the electronic auction web site.

52. (Previously Presented) A system for effecting payment for a purchaser of at least one item offered for an electronic auction sale by a seller via an electronic auction web site maintained by at least one computing device of an electronic auction system, said system comprising:

an electronic auction payment system integrated with said electronic auction system, said electronic auction payment system comprising a plurality of electronic auction payment accounts and means for maintaining a payment segment of said electronic auction web site and said plurality of electronic auction payment accounts corresponding to a plurality of users, including the purchaser, of the electronic auction web site, where each of the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts store funds therein and not information relating to sources which can be used to initiate payment, such as credit card information, and the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts include an electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item offered for the electronic auction sale and an electronic auction payment account corresponding to the seller;

means for performing at least one payment-related activity by said electronic auction payment system for effecting payment for said purchaser, said at least one payment-related activity selected from the group consisting of debiting an electronic auction payment account corresponding to the purchaser of the at least one item and maintained by said electronic auction payment system, and withdrawing funds from at least one account storing funds therein and not corresponding to at least one of the plurality of users; and

means for crediting at least one account corresponding to the seller to effect payment for the at least one item.

53. (Previously Presented) A payment system for effecting payment to a seller of at least one item offered for an electronic auction sale via an electronic auction web site and won by a winning bidder at the conclusion of the electronic auction sale, said electronic auction web site being maintained by an electronic auction system, said payment system comprising:

a database containing a plurality of electronic auction payment accounts, where each of the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts store funds therein and not information relating to sources which can be used to initiate payment, such as credit card information, and where one of the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts corresponds to the winning bidder of the at least one item and one of the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts corresponds to the seller; and

a computing device including application software for maintaining the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts and for automatically effecting payment to the seller by accessing the database and debiting funds stored within the electronic

auction payment account corresponding to the winning bidder of the at least one item and crediting at least one account corresponding to the seller without any intervention by the winning bidder following the conclusion of the electronic auction, wherein said payment system maintains the database containing the plurality of electronic auction payment accounts and a payment segment of the electronic auction web site.

54. (Previously Presented) A payment system for effecting payment for at least one of a plurality of online auction registered users of an online auction web site maintained by an online auction system, said payment system comprising:

a database containing information corresponding to a plurality of accounts of the plurality of online auction registered users, each of said plurality of accounts storing funds therein and not information relating to sources which can be used to initiate payment, such as credit card information; and

a computing device including application software for maintaining the plurality of accounts and for periodically effecting payment for the at least one of the plurality of online auction registered users by debiting funds stored within an account of the plurality of accounts and crediting at least one account, wherein the debited account corresponds to the at least one online auction registered user, wherein said payment system is integrated with said online auction system and maintains a payment segment of said online auction web site.

55. (Previously Presented) The payment system according to Claim 54, wherein application software periodically effects payment for the at least one of the plurality of online auction registered users without any intervention by the at least one online auction registered user.

56. (Previously Presented) A payment system for effecting payment to an operator of an online auction web site maintained by an online auction system, said payment system comprising:

a database containing information corresponding to a plurality of accounts of a plurality of online auction registered users, each of said plurality of accounts storing funds therein and not information relating to sources which can be used to initiate payment, such as credit card information; and

a computing device including application software for maintaining said plurality of accounts and for automatically effecting payment for at least one of the plurality of online auction registered users by debiting funds stored within an account of the plurality of accounts and crediting at least one account corresponding to the operator, wherein the debited account corresponds to the at least one online auction registered user, wherein said payment system is integrated with said online auction system and maintains a payment segment of said online auction web site.

57. (Previously Presented) The payment system according to Claim 56, wherein application software automatically effects payment for the at least one of the plurality of online auction registered users without any intervention by the at least one online auction registered user.